

**DECISION MEMO**  
**DIXIE VALLEY HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION**  
**U.S. FOREST SERVICE**  
**PLUMAS NATIONAL FOREST, BECKWOURTH RANGER DISTRICT**  
**PLUMAS COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Plumas County Fire Safe Council (PCFSC) requests that action be taken by the Plumas National Forest (PNF) to approve a Decision Memo so that the proposed and funded action for hazardous fuels reduction on private forest land adjacent to the PNF in Plumas County in Dixie Valley, CA can proceed. This decision will authorize the use of federal Stevens Grant funds to implement both mechanical and manual hazardous fuels reduction on private forest land. The grant was awarded to PCFSC in 2016 and project coordinators have been recruiting landowners with priority properties to participate in the project. There are 13 separate, private parcels involved in this project encompassing 74.3 acres adjacent to the PNF.

### **PROJECT LOCATION**

The Dixie Valley Hazardous Fuels Reduction (HFR) project is located approximately five miles west of Frenchman Lake in Plumas County, CA., The legal location is Dixie Mountain 7.5' USGS Quadrangle, in Township 24 North; Range 15 East; Sections 6, 17, 20 Mount Diablo Base Meridian. The project sites are comprised of Eastside Pine and Sagebrush vegetation, at an elevation of approximately 6000 feet.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

It is the PCFSC's mission to identify strategic locations where private forest thinning and fire resilient restoration projects can protect many resources in the event of wildfire. Adequate identification of priority project sites, as well as private landowner participation is vital to protecting private and public forest stands.

The Dixie Valley HFR project units within the scope of this project fit into this strategy, and are in alignment with the application of public funds to protect both private and public resources. The sites are selected based on landowner willingness to participate in the PCFSC community fuel reduction project as well as Registered Professional Forester's project area analysis.

The community of Dixie Valley has been identified as a "Community at Risk" in the Plumas County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) 2005. The project lies within the urban core of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) as identified in the Plumas County Fire Plan. The Forest Service has been given clear direction to treat lands within the Wildland Urban Interface

(WUI) to desired conditions as described in the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan as amended in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and subsequent Record of Decision (ROD) (USDA 2004a, b).

The project is adjacent to National Forest System (NFS) land and does provide connectivity to existing and proposed fuels treatments. Treatments will consist of mechanical mastication and/or hand thinning, hand piling, and burning on 74.3 acres of private lands. Hazardous fuels management objectives will be accomplished through rearranging ladder fuels with a “thin from below” prescription targeting removal of conifers and brush less than or equal to 10 inches DBH. Removal of small-diameter, ladder fuels will limit the ability for fire to spread into the canopy and will therefore reduce the potential threat of crown fire behavior and the risk of fire spreading to adjacent NFS lands.

## DECISION

I have decided to authorize the use of federal funds to complete this project.

The project is funded under the authority of the Wyden Amendment, Pubic Law 105-277, section 323, as amended by P.L. 109-54, and permanently authorized by P.L. 111-11, Section 3001. This project is a Plumas County Fire Safe Council project.

The project proposal meets requirements of Forest Service Interim Directive, FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, Categorical Exclusion from Documentation, 31.11, Category 2, “Activities that deal solely with the funding of programs, such as program budget proposals, disbursements, and transfer or reprogramming of funds” (7 CFR 1b.3(a)(2)). This category is appropriate because this decision authorizes the use of federal funds. A project file has been prepared at the discretion of the responsible official.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- **Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – *Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged Frog*:** All perennial and intermittent streams will be “flagged and avoided” on 82 feet (25 meters) on both sides of these stream types. Flag and avoided means that no entry will be allowed, whether by machinery or for hand thinning; this will effectively be a no treatment area.

Other than Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged frog, there are no other terrestrial or aquatic wildlife species of concern that are known to occur within the project area.

A complete botanical survey within the treatment units has not been completed. As stated in the “PCFSC Project Review and Analysis of the Dixie Valley HFR Project,” a complete botanical survey will be completed prior to operations and within the appropriate flowering period. If endangered, rare, or threatened species are located, a 50 foot treatment exclusion zone around the identified populations will be established.



- **Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds** – The project will not affect any flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.
- **Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas** – The project is not within or adjacent to any congressionally designated areas.
- **Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas** – The project is not within or adjacent to any inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas.
- **Research natural areas** – The project is not within or adjacent to any research natural areas.
- **American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites** – There are no known sites within the project area; tribal consultation was conducted and there were no local tribes that expressed concern.
- **Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas** – This project includes federal funding that will be expended; therefore this project falls under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Project effects on historic properties must be taken into consideration.

An inventory for cultural resources has been completed within the Area of Potential Effect (APE). The project proponent has provided the Beckwourth Ranger District Archaeologist with a copy of the final cultural resource report. The requirements set forth by the NHPA have been met. There are no cultural sites within the APE, therefore no concerns exist.

**Additional Considerations** - Standard noxious weed mitigations will be followed. Noxious weeds will be flagged for avoidance. Equipment will be cleaned prior to arrival at the project. Equipment will also be cleaned prior to leaving the project if a noxious weed site has been breached by equipment.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Tribal scoping was conducted by the Forest Service through an established tribal contact list which consisted of four tribes (Greenville Rancheria, Susanville Indian Rancheria, Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, and Maidu Summit Consortium).

The PCFSC participated in other public involvement which was not documented by the Forest Service.

## **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

This project is being conducted entirely on private lands using federal funding. The project is consistent with all federal, state, and local laws as they relate to private lands. Because these funds are from a federal source, the project is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act;

mitigations and other information related to resource management and federal regulations have been incorporated into project design.

This project will be conducted in accordance with requirements of the California Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to ensure compliance with California Water Code and the Federal Clean Water Act.

This project meets the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and implementing procedures outlined in the Region 5 Programmatic Agreement.

The project will not affect any threatened, endangered or candidate species and thereby complies with the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898 requiring each Federal agency to achieve environmental justice as part of its mission by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. The non-exclusive process used to develop this project, as well as consultation with tribes, ensured fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. No environmental justice issues were identified for this project as it is not expected to lead to disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES**


This decision is not subject to appeal under 36 CFR 215 or objection under 36 CFR 218.

### **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

This project may be implemented beginning immediately and continuing until completion, which is anticipated to be no later than December 2020.

### **CONTACT**

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Martin Senter, District Fuels Officer, Beckwourth Ranger District, Plumas National Forest, P.O. Box 7, Blairsden, CA 96103, [mesenter@fs.fed.us](mailto:mesenter@fs.fed.us) or (530) 836-7176.

  
Matthew Jedra  
District Ranger

  
Date



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